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General Assembly

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64th plenary meeting
Thursday, 16 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Fourth report of the General Committee
(A/55/250/Add.3)

The President: I should like to draw the attention of representatives to the fourth report of the General Committee, document A/55/250/Add.3, concerning a request by Equatorial Guinea for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item, "Observer status for the Economic Community of Central African States in the General Assembly".

In the report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional item entitled "Observer status for the Economic Community of Central African States in the General Assembly" should be included in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in the agenda of the current session this additional item?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to allocate the additional item to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 59

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): In the past seven years, my delegation has spoken on this agenda item many times, in several forums, including in plenary meeting. Most recently, our President, Stjepan Mesić, together with an overwhelming majority of Millennium Summit participants, expressed our unwavering commitment to see the reform and expansion of the Security Council through. Today, Croatia has taken the floor just to re-register this long-standing commitment of our delegation.

The matters of equitable representation, credibility, democratic conduct and, thus, the effectiveness of the Security Council, remain the top priority of this Organization. Why? Because the Council lacks credible representation, is threatened by an erosion of both legitimacy and effectiveness and continues to suffer from some arcane and non-transparent working methods. Therefore, we hold that the Council must be enlarged in both categories of membership in order to reflect the changes that have taken place in international affairs, and that its working methods must further be democratized and made accountable.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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We support the creation of five new permanent seats, of which two should be allocated to the industrialized and three to the developing countries. We believe that responsible involvement in international affairs at the regional and global levels, as well as a demonstrated capacity and willingness to shoulder related duties, including financial ones, should be important selection criteria. Regarding possible rotation in the permanent posts, it is entirely up to the regions to come up with their own arrangements, provided that each Member State consents to such an arrangement of its own free will. With respect to the allocation of non-permanent seats, we hold that, of four such seats, one should go to Africa, one to Asia, one to Latin America and the Caribbean and one to the Eastern European region.

Croatia favours the abolition of the veto. If, however, political realities preclude the evolution of the decision-making process in the Security Council in such a direction, we support, as a fall-back position, the reduction of the veto power and the use of the so-called double veto. In the interim, Croatia holds that all permanent members should have the same rights and obligations. We impress upon the permanent members, however, the need to demonstrate their awareness of the widespread unpopularity of the veto, and thereby show their respect for the democratic majority that holds that unfavourable view of the veto.

Regarding the numerical threshold of Security Council expansion, Croatia has been on the record for some time now as favouring expansion up to 24 seats. Croatia holds that the issue of periodic review must be a part of the reform package, because it provides a democratic mechanism to enforce accountability. Likewise, the Council's methods must further be democratized. In this regard, we wish to commend some past and current Council members for advancing transparency and innovative working formats during their respective presidencies; but there is still a long way to go.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On 12 September, during his introduction to this Assembly of his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General referred to the issue of reforming the Security Council, saying that

> "the minority, often a very small minority, should not withhold its consent unreasonably". (*A/55/PV.10, p. 2*)

Mexico fully agrees with the Secretary-General's statement. Over seven years of deliberations within the Working Group, we have seen how two very small minorities have blocked our progress.

The first minority is made up of the "pretenders" to a permanent post in the reformed Security Council. The countries that dream of acquiring this privilege are very few, but their ambitions to power have frustrated the attempts of the vast majority to build a more democratic and representative Security Council.

The second minority is even smaller. It is made up of the current five permanent members of the Security Council which, clinging to antiquated structures that have been overtaken by reality, are opposed to limitations to the immense powers conferred on them by the Charter, which are anachronisms at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Mexico is deeply committed to reforming the Security Council and has been for more than 20 years. We are eager for a comprehensive reform that not only increases the number of Council members to reflect the increase in the membership of our Organization, but also modifies its working methods and, especially, its outdated decision-making mechanism. Our heads of State and Government committed themselves to this far-reaching reform in the Millennium Declaration, when they decided

> "to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects". (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*)

Mexico does not favour the status quo. Far from assuming a passive stance with regard to the process of reforming the Security Council, my delegation has presented concrete proposals regarding both its enlargement and its decision-making methods. We have been creative, seeking at all times to foster the democratic values of equality, justice and transparency. Unfortunately, our attempts have been met with the intransigence of the small minorities that have kept the reform hostage to their ambitions or privileges.

In 1995, Mexico submitted to the consideration of the Working Group a plan to enlarge the Security Council in which, fully respecting the principle of the sovereign equality of States, only the number of non-permanent members would increase. The Mexican proposal, which remains relevant, has not even been considered by the Group. Later, in 1996, my country

presented concrete amendments to seven Articles of the Charter, seeking to limit the right of veto to those issues for which it was designed — measures adopted under the provisions of Chapter VII. The intransigence of the five permanent members has not allowed our amendments to be carefully studied.

It is ironic that the Security Council, the most visible organ of the United Nations, should be the least democratic part of an Organization that was established on the basis of the legal equality of States. The very existence of permanent members with special privileges goes against this fundamental principle of international relations. We cannot allow the ambitions and desire for power of a few to weaken it further.

Mr. Fall (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We will not tire of insisting on the need to limit the privilege of the veto. The five permanent members must listen to the voice of reason and accept that some of their prerogatives have become obsolete and offensive within the current international environment. We again strongly urge them to show flexibility. Sooner or later, they will have to accept that the General Assembly can take decisions without having to wait for the Council to recommend them. The reform must necessarily regulate the ability of one country to prevent the Organization from acting on peacekeeping issues.

Democracy is not achieved by increasing the number of the privileged. Democracy is not achieved by stressing inequalities. Democracy is not achieved by exacerbating the class system. Democracy is not achieved by granting special status to the powerful. Democracy is not achieved by committing injustices.

On the contrary, democracy is built by promoting conditions of equality. Democracy is based on justice. Democracy seeks the well-being and the participation of the majority.

As the Secretary-General states in his recent report on strengthening democracy,

> "democratization has taken root as a universal norm and practice at national and local levels." (*A/55/489, para. 28*)

Mexico believes that the moment has come to apply the same criteria to the institutions of the United Nations.

States that wish to become non-permanent members of the Council would achieve their aspiration by participating in one of the most representative democratic practices, that is, the electoral process under conditions of equality. Increasing their number would encourage democracy, giving to all the opportunity to accede to the Council, promoting alternation and allowing the will of the majority to triumph every year.

The very institution of permanent membership was a response to a historic need in circumstances that, thankfully, have been overcome. The current permanent members were not elected. Rather, they arose from the configuration of power that was born in Yalta and confirmed in San Francisco. Once the majority confirmed their privileged status, they have never been subjected to the electoral process. They got there and will never leave. The pretenders nurture the same hope. Were their dream to become reality, they would not have to compete democratically ever again. How can democracy be discussed on these terms?

In recent months, we have heard a veritable litany of numbers. We have been told, for instances, that many countries support enlarging the Security Council. This does not and should not surprise us. All the Members of the United Nations — all of them — believe that the membership of the Council must be enlarged to correspond to the increased number of States that make up our Organization. Consensus already exists on this point. The difference lies in the way to bring this about; the devil is in the details, as popular wisdom holds.

We have also been told that a majority supports enlarging both categories of membership, but, even by the most optimistic calculations of some of the pretenders, the number of countries that have voiced this opinion barely reaches 70. In any arithmetic system, 70 is barely one third of 189, very far from the 126 established under resolution 53/30. How can we talk about a majority in these circumstances?

It is also necessary to recognize that the way in which these apparently convincing numbers have been presented can lead to confusion. Those who want us to believe that they are in the majority seem to forget that, for example, although it is true that the African States have declared their support for enlarging both categories, none has done so in blanket terms. Rather, their support is based on the conviction that two of the new permanent posts will be assigned to Africa. Would

they maintain the same position if they were not given the two seats they seek?

The role and the interests of the various regional Groups cannot be ignored. It would not be acceptable to attempt to impose on any of them arbitrary solutions that do not enjoy their support.

The Working Group created by the General Assembly in 1993 is the appropriate forum within which this issue should be debated. The Assembly's mandate is clear: to seek a general agreement that grants legitimacy, credibility and stability to the exercise of reform.

We must not lose patience. Seven years of deliberations have demonstrated, not the ineffectiveness of the Working Group, but the political sensitivity and difficulty of the exercise. We must not forget that the 1965 reform, which, by the way, was very modest in scope, actually took a greater number of years. Now our goals are more ambitious: to transform the Security Council into a more democratic, representative and transparent organ. To set peremptory and arbitrary deadlines will only harm our efforts. The reform will take place when we reach a general agreement in the Working Group as requested by the Assembly, neither sooner nor later.

On the other hand, the Working Group has been able to make significant progress on issues related to the working methods of the Security Council. Thanks to the efforts of the Group, the members of the Council have agreed to open up their deliberations, and to act in a more transparent fashion. We welcome these developments, and we reiterate that we cannot relax our efforts until we obtain an institutionalization of the measures adopted in order to provide us with legal certainty.

Mexico will continue to endeavour to design a more democratic Security Council, in which the voice of all is heard equally; a representative Security Council, which correctly reflects the current membership of the United Nations; a transparent Security Council that operates in the public spotlight and not within dark conclaves; a legitimate Security Council, whose decisions take into account the aspirations of the international community and, finally, a responsible Security Council accountable to the General Assembly, from whose members it derives its authority. In the search for such a Council, the Assembly can count on the enthusiastic participation of my country.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): It is sometimes easy over the course of long and sensitive negotiations to lose sight of the fundamental objectives and the common interests that we are striving to achieve. Parochial interests can become entrenched and negotiating dynamics can assume a life and a rationale of their own, to the detriment of substantive progress. Regrettably, after seven years of work in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, this is the point that we appear to have reached.

Reform and expansion of the Security Council is our common interest. It is driven by our common concern to restore the representative nature of the Council, to improve its effectiveness and to shore up its credibility, authority and legitimacy.

Australia is not unrealistic about the difficulties of these issues. They are inherently complex and political in nature. Considerable national interests are at stake. But like any negotiation of this importance, flexibility, compromise and an eye to the wider common good will be critical if a balanced package of reforms is to be agreed. After seven years of intensive work in the Open-ended Working Group, it does seem to us that the basic contours of a reform package can be discerned. There are, certainly, differences over the details. But on each of the key issues, something close to general agreement is emerging. These include: first, expansion in both categories of membership, allowing for five new permanent members from both developed and developing countries, and a comparable number of new non-permanent members; secondly, restraints on the use of the veto, leading over time to limiting its application to decisions under Chapter VII of the Charter, and ultimately to its abolition; thirdly, an ongoing process of reform of the Council's working methods to improve the transparency and inclusiveness of decision-making, while preserving the Council's prerogative to conduct its proceedings in camera where this is justified by the sensitivity of an issue. Clearly, substantial and welcome progress has been made in this area in the last two years. Fourthly, a review of new arrangements for an expanded and reformed Council after 10 or 15 years, allowing for the possibility of further reforms to reflect geo-political change.

Sadly, while these contours are clear and general agreement appears within striking distance, progress

continues to founder over the strong opposition of a relatively small number of Member States to one or another of these elements. Some oppose an expansion of the permanent membership because they fear an impact on their perceived relative influence. Others oppose any reform of the veto, not out of concern to improve the decision-making and credibility of the Council, but to protect old privilege.

The current stalemate will persist unless a greater degree of flexibility is shown by all parties, but particularly by those who are holding to entrenched positions shared by only, I repeat, a handful of other Member States. The time has come to look beyond narrow national positions and to reflect more seriously on where and how compromises can be found.

Let me reiterate at this point where Australia's interests in this issue lie. We are not an aspirant to permanent membership. No parochial Australian interest will be served by agreement to one reform model over another. Our interests lie in strengthening the Council, and by doing so, strengthening the United Nations.

We attach great importance to the principle of equitable geographic representation, and we believe that the erosion of equitable representation since the Council was last expanded in 1965 — when, as the Assembly knows, the United Nations membership stood at 113 — must be reversed if we are to prevent further erosion of the Organization's credibility, its relevance and its effectiveness. Our opposition to the veto reflects a position that we have held since 1945, since before I was born. And our strong support for both improved working methods and periodic review reflects our attachment to the principles of transparency and accountability.

Let me expand briefly on the issue of periodic review because this is something to which we are very attached and we do not think this matter has been given enough consideration. We do not support the principle of periodic review out of some masochistic sense of anticipation of another round of protracted negotiations in 10 or 15 years. We support it for practical reasons. First, we think it could be an important circuit-breaker in the current negotiations, a means of assuring all Member States that the reforms that we agree to at this time are not locked in for ever. Secondly, it is a vital mechanism for accountability, ensuring that the permanent members of the Council, old and new, uphold their responsibility under the Charter to act on behalf of the wider membership. And thirdly, it reflects the obvious reality that the world is not a static place, and the composition of the Council will have to be adjusted again at some point in the future to reflect further geo-political change.

It is instructive to look closely at the Working Group's report to the General Assembly. On the face of it, the Working Group spent long hours in meetings, but made little progress in narrowing differences. The failure of the Group to agree even on a set of general observations, as it had done the previous year, would seem to suggest that positions are even farther apart. In fact, that is not entirely the case.

Annex XIII of the report, which contains the Bureau's general proposed observations, is an important summary of the substantive aspects of the Working Group's efforts over the last year. It underlines the depth of discussion, and it very usefully highlights the areas of both agreement and disagreement. To that extent, we think that it provides a very good basis for the Working Group to continue its efforts next year.

Let me in this context pay tribute to the previous President of the General Assembly, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, and to Ambassadors John De Saram of Sri Lanka and Hans Dahlgren of Sweden, for their leadership of the Working Group over the last year. That these general observations did not enjoy consensus support is no reflection on their efforts. We all know from our delegations on the Working Group that this was not for want of trying.

But the absence of consensus on this part of the Working Group's report underlines three key points I referred to earlier: first, that progress on particular issues is being held up by a small, unrepresentative number of Member States; secondly, that the negotiating dynamics of the Working Group have assumed a life of their own, to the detriment of substantive progress; and thirdly, that greater flexibility and a new spirit of compromise are needed before agreement on a balanced package of reforms is within reach.

This is the challenge that awaits all of us, along with the President of the General Assembly and his Vice-Chairpersons as they lead us in the Working Group next year. In taking up the challenge, we will be building on the substantial body of work of recent

years, but our new President will have behind him the full authority of our leaders, who at the Millennium Summit exhorted us to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform. In that endeavour the President may be assured of Australia's complete support.

Mr. Pradhan (Bhutan): At the recent Millennium Summit I was privileged to observe the discussions at the third round table with my head of Government. The meeting was chaired by the President of Venezuela and attended by a number of Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers from all parts of the world. During their deliberations, one issue that was highlighted by our leaders, and on which they shared broad agreement, was the critical need to reform the United Nations. I particularly recall an intervention pointing out that despite what we have been told about reforms taking place, some of the United Nations institutions remain terribly outdated, the Security Council being one of them. Our leaders were of the view that for the United Nations to enjoy unquestioned legitimacy, the Security Council needed urgent reform to reflect current realities and not those of the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. At those discussions, our leaders expressed grave concern that the efforts to reform the Security Council had thus far not been fruitful.

Seven years have now passed since the inception of the Open-ended Working Group, and it is a matter of great regret and concern that we have failed to reach agreement on one of the most crucial issues before this Organization. In some respects, my delegation is not surprised at the outcome in the Working Group, especially on cluster I issues. There is an inherent obstacle in the natural tendency not to relinquish one's position of power and privilege. Unless there is concern for the greater good of our United Nations and there is the political will to make changes in the Council's permanent seats to reflect current realities, we do not see possibilities of meaningful progress. But it would be right, just and fair and, above all, democratic — all concepts and words that we hear so frequently in these halls on a host of other issues — to make the Security Council representative of the United Nations membership. From the Asian perspective, because they are economic and population giants and have sociocultural and political clout in the region and beyond, my delegation supports India and Japan for permanent membership in the Security Council. We cannot continue to deny the representation of vast continents and populations on the Security Council.

My delegation realizes that only a handful of countries can be permanent members. For countries to be chosen to fill this category, they should have the necessary qualifications and the capacity to represent their regions, and not simply their own national concerns. Selection to the permanent category should mean a greater ability to fulfil larger international responsibilities than other United Nations Members. Permanent members should make substantially larger contributions to the United Nations budgets. They should be able to commit more troops, equipment and resources for maintaining peace and security. These attributes would enable the rest of the membership to be more amenable to putting the permanent members on a higher pedestal, a position of international prestige and greater responsibility.

Bhutan has supported the non-aligned position on the question of Security Council reform and expansion not simply because it is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. We are quite convinced that the proposal of the non-aligned countries reflects the changed global political and economic environment and that the majority of United Nations Member States support this position. Hence, Bhutan has called for the expansion of the Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, and we see this as imperative. Furthermore, it is equally essential that developing countries that have long endured unjust marginalization within the Council be given adequate representation in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

My delegation is aware that the veto power of permanent members is closely linked to the issue of expansion of the Council. In this regard, we share the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that the veto should be curtailed and that the Charter should be amended so that the veto power should apply only to actions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

The leadership of the President of the General Assembly in our quest to reform the Security Council is very important. The Secretary-General's advice and guidance is vital in this process. My delegation looks forward to substantive progress during the course of the Millennium Assembly. In the continuing discussions on this matter, we need to expedite our work and keep our meetings both transparent and open-ended.

Last but not least, my delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate the new non-permanent members of the Security Council on their recent elections: Colombia, Ireland, Mauritius, Norway and Singapore.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): The question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters is an important item on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations at this millennium session. After considering this question for six consecutive years, we have now arrived at a very crucial juncture. In fact, the General Assembly today should heed the earnest call to action made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan when he sent his millennium report to this body last March. In the Millennium Declaration, the heads of State and Government also called for intensified efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council. Our delegation firmly believes that settlement of this question will be a major achievement in our follow-up efforts to realize the Millennium Declaration.

In his statement this session during the general debate, summing up the views of member countries, the former President of the Assembly, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, rightly pointed out that the question of reform and expansion of the Security Council to reflect the realities of today's world and make the Council more representative and more legitimate was emphasized by many delegations. The issue before us is very challenging, however. The Open-ended Working Group charged with this task has held numerous meetings and informal consultations over the last six years, and the views of member countries are very divided on some subtle but fundamental elements, namely, the questions of the expansion of the membership — in particular with regard to an increase in permanent seats — veto power, and enhanced transparency in the work of the Council. The Open-ended Working Group has made tremendous efforts, yet solutions to these questions are still beyond our reach.

Our delegation regrets that, after strenuous efforts last year, the Group failed to include in its annual report general observatory remarks. Keeping this in mind, we feel that the tasks at hand for the Group this year will be even more difficult and burdensome. However, our delegation wishes to commend the efforts of the President's predecessor and his two Vice-Chairmen in guiding the work of the Open-ended Working Group during the last session. It is our sincere hope that the Group will continue its work this year with greater determination and enthusiasm.

Our position on the need for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council is crystal clear. We have also spoken on various occasions about how we believe the Council should be reformed and expanded. Let me take this opportunity to give a brief outline of our position on this question.

The reform of the Security Council must ensure that the Council will be more representative and accountable, and its work more transparent and more legitimate. Viet Nam strongly supports an increase in the Council's membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. In our opinion, an expanded Council of about 24 members can ensure that the Council works effectively and legitimately. Developing countries must be represented appropriately and be able to participate fully in the Council's decisions on important matters of world peace and security. With regard to an increase in the permanent membership, the general package to be agreed upon should ensure that developing countries from the three continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America are represented. That expansion may also take into account the need to include some developing countries, as well as certain developed countries, such as India, Japan and Germany, which can play a significant role and which have made major financial and material contributions to the United Nations.

On the issue of the veto, Viet Nam fully supports the position of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, namely that measures should be taken, as interim steps, to curtail the application of this power. Until it is finally eliminated, the power of the veto should be used only to deal with matters that may fall under provisions of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Now more than ever before, the United Nations must ensure that it can demonstrate its ability to reform itself and move forward with tangible steps in this regard. It is high time that member countries make more vigorous efforts to commence true negotiations in order to realize the reform of the Council and revitalize the abundant strengths of the United Nations. It is our firm conviction that for that to happen, Member States

must act with great cohesion and stronger determination and with flexibility and vision. My delegation looks forward to working in this manner with other delegations in the coming meetings of the Open-ended Working Group next year. We hope that some critical progress can be achieved to break the current deadlock on this crucial issue.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, for his guidance on the issue of Security Council reform during the fifty-fourth session. I would also like to thank the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador De Saram of Sri Lanka and our former colleague, Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden, for preparing the excellent report that is before us.

The urgent need and broad support for Security Council reform was reaffirmed yet again at the Millennium Summit and during the general debate last September. According to our observations, as many as 99 leaders took up the issue of Security Council reform, making it — along with the broad issues of globalization and development — one of the most frequently discussed issues. The importance given to this issue is reflected in the Millennium Summit Declaration, which emphasizes the need to intensify our efforts to realize genuine reform. The fact that, as of this morning, as many as 96 delegations are inscribed on the speakers' list for today's meeting is yet further testimony of the commitment of Member States to the task ahead.

Just as significantly, 69 delegations at the Millennium Summit and the subsequent general debate indicated their support for expanding both the permanent and non-permanent membership, while only four delegations explicitly supported an expansion of only the non-permanent membership.

If we add those countries that have expressed their positions at previous sessions of the General Assembly, the African countries that subscribe to the position of the Organization of African Unity and the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), whose views were expressed in a recent joint statement by ministers of CARICOM countries and of Japan, it is clear that an overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership supports the expansion of both categories. With that clear and broad convergence of views on the need to expand both the permanent and the non-permanent membership, we should now focus our attention on two questions of major importance: the optimal size of the expanded Council and the veto.

As for the size of the expanded Council, we should give due consideration to the fact that the number of Security Council members has not changed since 1965, while the membership of the United Nations has grown by 72 countries since then. The need to expand the Council to ensure that it is truly representative of today's international community is beyond dispute. It has been Japan's position that a membership of 24 would redress the imbalance while maintaining the Council's effectiveness. In that context, it was indeed a welcome development that one of the permanent members modified its position last April and showed some flexibility on the question of the maximum size of the Council.

On the question of the veto, it is clear that an overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States wish to restrict its use. Here again, it is encouraging that a permanent member has shown some willingness to consider restraining the use of the veto in certain situations. We hope that all the permanent members will be more attentive to the views that have been put forward by other Members of the United Nations and will make every effort to advance the discussion on this question.

I want to point out the important fact that while the Open-ended Working Group has been engaged in deliberations for the better part of a decade, the nature and scope of the Security Council's work have undergone a profound change. The Council is now being called upon to take a more comprehensive approach to questions of international peace and security by addressing the root causes of conflict, which include economic and social as well as political and military issues. Recently, the Council has entrusted peacekeeping operations with mandates that encompass nation-building activities and the establishment of civil administrations, in addition to traditional military and civilian police activities. These developments clearly underline the need to expand the Council, particularly its permanent membership, whose composition reflects the world that existed more than half a century ago.

Moreover, there has been a conspicuous decrease in the financial burden shouldered by the five permanent members. Their share of the regular United

Nations budget has decreased from 64 per cent in 1965, at the time the Council was last expanded, to just 38 per cent at this time. Their share of the peacekeeping budget has decreased from 63 per cent in 1974, when the peacekeeping budget was created, to 47 per cent. That decrease reflects the significant changes which have taken place in the international community, and those changes must likewise be reflected in the composition of the Security Council if that important body is to retain its credibility.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Working Group's Bureau for the tremendous service it has rendered by compiling the exhaustive list of proposals put forward on cluster I issues, which are contained, together with the Bureau's own observations, in the report of the Working Group to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session (A/54/47). That document will be an invaluable guide to us as we proceed with our work.

I would like also to encourage the Bureau to solicit the views of as many Member States as possible before the Working Group reconvenes, and to continue to identify areas where agreement can be reached, especially on cluster I issues. Moreover, I hope that the Bureau will come up with suggestions as to how we might focus our deliberations in the most effective manner.

I assure the Assembly that Japan, for its part, will cooperate fully in the endeavour of advancing our discussions with the aim of achieving our common and vitally important objective.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): The French position in the debate on enlargement of the Security Council was stated by His Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, on 6 September 2000, at the Millennium Summit. He recalled that "France is committed to this critical reform" and that it "calls for ... enlarging both categories of Security Council membership" (*A/55/PV.3, p. 16*).

The President of the Republic reaffirmed that position on 7 September, at the meeting of the Security Council at the level of heads of State or Government. There, he stated that the enlargement of the permanent and non-permanent categories should not only benefit the industrialized countries but should also result in greater representation of the countries of the South.

The position of France in this debate is guided by a resolve to take account of the emergence of new Powers and to enable the Security Council to continue fully to play its role. The Security Council must be able to take the necessary decisions when international peace and security are threatened by humanitarian crisis or by massive violations of human rights.

That position is similar to that expressed by a great many speakers at the Millennium Summit and during the ensuing general debate. A vast majority felt that such reform was a priority. Many delegations argued in favour of enlargement in both categories of membership. The momentum of the Millennium Summit should encourage us to pursue this effort, which has been under way since 1993.

The work since that time has already produced results. It led to the consensus adoption two years ago of resolution 53/30, by which the Assembly determined that any General Assembly resolution or decision on this subject required the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the membership. That work also made it possible for the Working Group to make progress in its consideration of matters relating to the Council's working methods. The General Assembly welcomed that development this year when it renewed the Working Group's mandate for the fifty-fifth session.

The progress can also be gauged by the Security Council's practices. It is easy to see the efforts that it has made towards greater transparency in its work, as reflected in a larger number of public meetings, during which representatives of the Secretariat or Special Representatives of the Secretary-General are more frequently invited to make presentations. There has also been progress with respect to the information that is furnished to non-members of the Council with respect to informal consultations.

France contributed to this effort during its presidency of the Council in June, in particular through an increased use of the possibilities provided by the Internet. We are constantly appealing for the dialogue between Council members and troop-contributing countries to be strengthened. We also appeal for greater transparency and the improved functioning of the sanctions Committees.

With regard to the continuation of the work of the General Assembly on the expansion of the Security Council, we must continue to work tirelessly to achieve the goal we set ourselves in 1993. This will require,

first of all, the search for imaginative formulas capable of meeting with general agreement. Efforts must also be made to engage in dialogue to reconcile points of view and maintain the tranquil atmosphere necessary for our work. The Bureau of the Working Group has done admirable work in this area this year, and we should like to pay a warm tribute to the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Dahlgren and Ambassador De Saram. We have every confidence that the new President of the Assembly and the other members of the Bureau will continue in that direction.

Ms. Tan (Singapore): We are still on our merry-go-round. For the eighth time, we will debate United Nations Security Council reform; for the eighth time, we will repeat old arguments; and for the eighth time, we will probably not get anywhere. The theme of our statement is therefore very simple: we are going round in circles and not getting anywhere because we are addressing fringe issues and not core issues in the debate, like the veto.

The situation could, perhaps, be treated as a comedy, if it were not for the fact that the stakes are very high in this debate. What is at stake is nothing less than the peace and security of the world, for which the Security Council has been assigned primary responsibility. The real tragedy of this debate is that we never hear loudly enough the voices of the real stakeholders: the small States of the world. At least 110 of our Member States have populations of less than 10 million. There are another 30 or so States which have nominally larger populations, of between 10 million to 30 million, but they are caught next to larger neighbours, which dwarf them. The interests of this vast majority of Member States are clear and simple: they wish to see Security Council reform leading to a stronger and more effective Council.

Singapore belongs to this group. We probably have a greater interest in peace and stability than most States. Our total trade is three times the size of our gross national product; trade needs stability, and instability stifles trade. We are also among the first to acknowledge that Security Council reform is long overdue. There is no way that a Council fashioned in 1945, reflecting the needs and interests of the victorious Powers of the Second World War, can be said to adequately cater to the needs and interests of our times. Our world has changed dramatically in the past 55 years, and it is likely to change even more dramatically in the years to come. We therefore support, rather than oppose, Security Council reform.

Nothing illustrates the magnitude of the change better than a sentence in paragraph 30 of the Secretary-General's Millennium report (A/54/2000), in which he states,

> "Simply put, our post-war institutions were built for an inter-*national* world, but we now live in a *global* world."

This is no small change. If the Security Council's primary responsibility is to move from international to global peace and security, there has to be a serious change of mindset among the Security Council members, especially the permanent members. To carry out their responsibilities seriously, they will have to put global interests ahead of national interests. But none of the permanent members has ever done this. If we add more permanent members as a result of Security Council reform, do we want the new members to behave like the old members, or to behave differently?

Let us stress another important point. If the new permanent members behave like the current permanent members — assuming all the perks and privileges, without taking on any specific responsibilities, such as greater financial responsibilities — the United Nations will never be rescued from the financially crippled state that it has been in for more than a decade. The great irony of the United Nations is that many want a permanent place in the key organ, but none want to take care of its financial health. Is it in the interests of the United Nations to give the valuable veto power without assigning commensurate responsibilities?

This is the main reason why we cannot avoid discussing the question of the veto if we want to engage in Security Council reform. A group of 10 countries has put it very eloquently, stating,

> "General agreement on a comprehensive reform package is unlikely to be achieved without an understanding on the future scope and application of the veto".

The veto is a defining element of the Security Council, distinguishing it from all other bodies in the world. Furthermore, it is not a static instrument. The founding fathers of the United Nations anticipated a limited use for it. In 55 years, it has grown into an enormous instrument, which, while rarely used formally, has completely dictated the nature of

decision-making in the Council. The failures of the Security Council in the tragedies of Rwanda and Srebrenica, for example, can be directly traced to the veto. We challenge anyone to disprove this point.

But let us also quickly add here that we are political realists. We do not believe that the veto can be abolished in a reformed Security Council. At its core, it serves a useful purpose. It would be disastrous for the United Nations to launch or authorize a war, as it did in the cases of Iraq and Yugoslavia, against any nuclear Power. The veto can provide a reality check, which is sometimes needed in international relations.

But the veto, like any other powerful instrument, needs its checks and balances. It must also be linked to the principle of accountability. Last year, the Foreign Minister of Germany wisely advocated that a permanent member be asked to explain to the General Assembly the use of a veto. This year, we would like to suggest that this principle be extended to the informal use of the veto. For example, who made the crucial decision to block additional deployment of United Nations forces in Rwanda and Srebrenica, and why? Who will accept ultimate responsibility for these decisions?

Another undeniable reality of international relations is that the distribution of power is dynamic. History never stops or ends. The five most powerful members of the global community in 2000 are not the same as the five most powerful members of the international community in 1945. There will be even greater changes by 2045, when the United Nations celebrates its one hundredth anniversary. Should the structure of the United Nations be based on a frozen picture of the international Powers of 1945? Or should it be flexible? We believe that it should be the latter. That is why we have said that when general agreement is reached on the expansion of the Security Council, Japan and Germany would naturally qualify as new permanent members.

The President returned to the Chair.

We cannot, however, reform the Security Council without taking into consideration the needs and interests of the developing countries, who provide 80 per cent of the world's population — and now close to 100 per cent of United Nations peacekeepers. The challenge for us is to ensure that the needs and interests of this vast proportion of humanity are given due weight in any Security Council reform.

But this is a challenge we have not even come close to facing. Instead, to be completely honest, we have had a completely warped debate on Security Council reform. The debate is controlled and managed by a very few small number of actors: the permanent five, whose only interest is to preserve their privileges in perpetuity; and a small group of major and medium-sized Powers, who believe that they have arrived and deserve the same privileges. The interests driving this debate are therefore purely privilege and power, not the needs and interests of the global community.

The Open-ended Working Group and its working methods should therefore not be blamed for the fact that the discussions are not progressing faster. In fact, the Working Group's "fault", if it can be called that, lies in its being too representative, democratic and transparent; qualities that continue to evade the Security Council. Indeed, for the record, it is also worth reiterating that much of the improvement in the working methods of the Security Council has been as a result of the discussions within the Working Group.

Not once in this entire seven-year debate on Security Council reform have we heard any major State declare that it deserves permanent membership because it is willing to give a solemn commitment to put global interests ahead of national interests. But if we get no such commitments, why should we — the small States who make up the vast majority of United Nations Member States and who also have the greatest vested interest in a new Security Council dedicated to global interests — support any Security Council reform that ignores our interests?

This is the main reason why Singapore has been advocating great caution in this debate on Security Council reform. We have a deep fear that a few countries will develop some kind of "quick fix" that will preserve or enhance their national privileges, while ignoring the needs and interests of the larger membership of the United Nations. We are also worried about a step-by-step approach, because, until we know the final direction of our steps, how do we know we are not heading down the wrong path? We would therefore like to end our remarks with a small appeal to our fellow small States to be careful and vigilant in this debate on Security Council reform. If we are not careful, our needs and interests will be trampled on, as the major and medium-sized Powers reshuffle the Security Council deck to suit their interests.

It is really the same old story all over again. When elephants, big or medium, fight, the grass suffers. And when they make love and deliver "quick fix" or "slow fix" Security Council reform, the grass will suffer also.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed at 1 p.m.

The list of speakers in the debate on this item will be closed at 1 p.m.

It was so decided.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to pay tribute to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab for the wise manner in which he led the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and related matters.

I would also like to express our thanks to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador John De Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Hans Dahlgren of Sweden for the patience and perseverance they have shown throughout the past year.

The consideration today of this important issue comes after another phase of intense discussions within the Working Group. The report before the Assembly is a very useful source of information on this phase, although it contains no specific recommendations on the substantial issues that were discussed.

Nonetheless, the report indicates that the detailed and in-depth discussions were marked by great objectivity, open-mindedness and pragmatism, going beyond general statements, and gave voice to ideas and concrete, rational proposals that have significantly clarified the major issues that are at stake.

However, once again, it is regrettable that these proposals have not been translated into tangible and measurable progress. In actual fact, the results that we had all hoped for have not been attained. This reveals the difficulty of our task, while also reflecting the significance of the interests and stakes involved and, at the same time, showing the depth of differences on certain points — and this despite the accumulation of a very comprehensive set of suggestions and comments. This should hardly surprise us, because we do not believe that any issue can be more politically sensitive or be likely to have profound and lasting consequences for the United Nations than this issue, since it deals with the composition and functioning of the Organization's fundamental organ for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Despite the legitimate frustration that we feel, we nevertheless are convinced that the general momentum for reform should be maintained and given further impetus, and that discussions should continue within the Working Group, because without a doubt the Working Group is the only suitable framework for such reflection. My delegation hopes that the Working Group will continue its work during the next session on the basis of transparency, in order to formulate, in a relaxed atmosphere and a completely non-confrontational context, a programme of overall reform of the Council in all its aspects that is acceptable to all the Member States.

This year once again the discussions within the Working Group have shown that, although there are clearly areas of convergence on certain non-insignificant aspects of reform — such as working methods — serious differences remain with regard to the veto and the enlargement, composition and size of the Council.

From this perspective, despite the complexity of the issues at stake, broad agreement is emerging on several fundamental points and, above all, on the need to ensure greater transparency in the work of the Council. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Member States feels that the Council should be more democratic in the way in which it operates, more representative in its composition, more transparent in its working methods, more capable of giving an account of its work, and more efficient in its activities. Member States also feel the Council should enjoy the support and trust of the Member States.

In this respect, the improvements in the functioning and working methods of the Council are a response to the need for effectiveness and transparency. In this context the efforts of the Security Council — efforts highlighted by the recent adoption of several measures — should be pursued. We note with satisfaction that the Council has introduced into its practice positive measures designed in particular to improve its relations with the General Assembly and to increase the number of public debates on current issues. Although the changes are still at an experimental stage, these initiatives, which were

inspired by the debate that took place within the Working Group, have helped the Council make some progress towards achieving the final objective: to ensure that the Security Council is a transparent, democratic and credible body. These practical measures are the first fruits of our common effort. We strongly hope that they will be institutionalized and incorporated in the Council's rules of procedure in order to guarantee their systematic application. Nevertheless, much remains to be done.

The same is true of the regrettable practice of having informal negotiations and discussions among a few privileged parties, excluding the vast majority of delegations. The Security Council should consult on an ongoing basis with the States that are directly or indirectly affected by conflicts or whose situation is discussed in the Council, as well as the representatives of regional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States, and give them the opportunity to present their positions to the Council before it begins informal consultations.

Greater efforts should also be made with regard to the troop-contributing countries, whose role in maintaining peace and international security goes without saying, with a view to their being included in the formulation of mandates for forces deployed by the United Nations. In this respect, we welcome the important step taken by the Security Council in adopting resolution 1327 (2000) on 13 November, underlining the need to improve and strengthen the mechanism for consultations with troop-contributing countries throughout all the phases of peacekeeping operations.

Finally, I would like to reiterate some comments that I shared with members of the Security Council on 4 October last, when we were examining the Palestinian question. I expressed my concern over the growing trend to oppose the holding of formal sessions, to restrict the ability to take the floor to members of the Council and to recommend that speakers adopt a particular tone. I pointed out that all Member States had an absolute right to request a public meeting and to take the floor if they wished in Council debates. I felt that to restrict the right to speak and to prefer the secrecy of consultations to a frank, transparent and open debate was not democratic and was contrary to the very principles on which the Organization is based.

Similarly, I would draw the attention of Member States to a worrying tendency for the Council to go off course; for some time now it has been dealing with matters that are clearly not within its responsibility, but come under bodies of the General Assembly or of the Economic and Social Council. In fact, the Security Council, charged with peacekeeping and international security and very much in demand to deal with serious conflicts shaking the world, is by its own choice, being transformed into a simple committee of the General Assembly or even a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council. It therefore appears to us to be urgently necessary to sound the alarm so that the Council fulfils the mandate given to it by the Charter and leaves it to the competent organs, with which it can cooperate and interact, to deal with matters that are within their competence and that they are best equipped and prepared to deal with.

I turn now to the question of the veto, which my delegation feels is intrinsically linked to that of the enlargement of the Council. It remains at the heart of the problem of Security Council reform and is clearly one of the most complex and controversial issues that we have to deal with in the framework of the restructuring of the Council. Keeping the right of veto has made the Security Council, whose decisions have world-wide scope and effects, a political instrument of the permanent members. Although the formal exercise of the veto has lessened since the end of the cold war, the simple threat of recourse to it has often been exploited by certain countries for their own interests, to the detriment of the preservation of international peace and security. Moreover, the right of veto, which gives the permanent members an exclusive and dominant role, denies the principles of democracy and sovereign equality between States, and recourse to it, as has often been shown in the past, prevents the Council from responding to the wishes of the international community.

For all these reasons, the vast majority of Member States have supported the view that the right of veto in the Council is anachronistic, discriminatory and anti-democratic, and have therefore underscored the need for a progressive restriction of this privilege, limiting it first to questions relating to Chapter VII of the Charter, before its total elimination, so that a more democratic decision-taking process can apply in the Council. While we wish to be realistic, and recognize the difficulty of the task, we hope that the permanent

members will themselves acknowledge what needs to be done and be much more open and less dogmatic in their approach to this problem.

With regard to the enlargement of the Council, which is just as controversial, a broad majority has clearly spoken out on the need to remedy the current imbalance and the lack of representativity in the Council's structure by ensuring a more balanced and fairer geographic representation and by strengthening the participation of developing countries. The Council does not reflect the political changes that have taken place at the international level over the past decades, just as it no longer represents universality and the plurality of its mandates. This lack of representation leads to a loss of the Council's legitimacy and credibility; hence the need to review its composition and its size.

In this respect, I would like to stress that any formula which would exclude the interests of the developing countries would be counter-productive and certainly unacceptable. Here my delegation reiterates its support for the specific proposals made by the Non-Aligned Movement, and in particular that relating to an increase in the number of Council members, which we hope will be studied and receive all due consideration. In this context, the Non-Aligned Movement, while recognizing the difficulty of achieving agreement on the category of permanent members, and with concern to promote a prompt reform of the Council, proposes that enlargement should be limited for the moment to the non-permanent category. For the United Nations to remain in harmony with a rapidly changing world, the reform of the Council should relate to questions where an area of common interest can be most easily found.

I would stress at this stage that any enlargement of the Security Council should lead to increased representation for Africa, the region which has the greatest number of Member States and which has no permanent representative in the Council. This need is underscored by the fact that the majority of questions that the Council is dealing with today relate to developing countries in general and African countries in particular. The position of Africa on the reform of the Council was formulated by the African heads of State and Government in 1997 at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Harare, where they solemnly requested the enlargement of the Council to 11 seats, the allocation of two permanent seats on a representative rotational basis, with the same prerogatives as those of the other permanent members, and two non-permanent seats to be shared between African States, according to criteria and methods agreed by the Africans themselves. In the same vein, my delegation feels that a reformed Council, composed of at least 26 members, would be more representative and be able to work with the desired efficiency.

Security Council reform is one of the most important aspects of the strengthening, revitalization and democratization of the United Nations. In order to be truly comprehensive, reform requires us, inter alia, to renew the various organs of the Organization and to ensure a better balance of powers and responsibilities between its organs, in conformity with their respective mandates, and in particular between the Security Council and the General Assembly, which enjoys a much broader mandate than any other United Nations body, as was rightly reaffirmed by our heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration.

Several years have gone by since the Working Group was established and we note that no final agreement has yet been reached on one of the most critical issues facing our Organization, in spite of the efforts made to that end. Our frustration at the slow pace of reform should not discourage us from seeking the outlines of a solution. There is a need for substantial progress in the Council's reform process, but we feel that the task of restructuring the Council should in no way be subject to a deadline or pushed towards a partial decision taken in haste, which would compromise the opportunity to achieve real reform and might cast a shadow over this very sensitive process, whose ultimate objective is the shared aspiration of all States Members of our Organization. We therefore feel it essential that the interests of all States and regions be taken seriously into account in this historic debate. In any case, the vital question of Security Council reform must be addressed in strict respect of the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter.

In conclusion, I wish to stress yet again the importance that my delegation attaches to the objectives of comprehensive, genuine and far-reaching Security Council reform and to reiterate our will and desire to cooperate with the Council in order to make the Working Group's work at its next session as constructive and fruitful as possible.

Mr. Schumacher (Germany): It is becoming more and more difficult to be creative about reform

initiatives because so many things have already been said. To retain the picture painted by the representative of Singapore of lovemaking elephants trampling around, we have now been trampling around for almost eight years, but we have not even damaged the grass. We have just stirred up the dust.

Hardly anyone denies the need to bring the Security Council into line with today's political conditions and the need for reform. This issue was one of the outstanding elements of speeches made by our heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit. We cannot just turn our heads away and continue business as usual. The world has changed; the nature of conflicts has changed; but the Security Council has, in principle, remained the same ever since 1945, with the permanent members having gradually reduced their financial burden, as laid out impressively by Ambassador Satoh of Japan.

What do we need? We need a more representative Council and therefore expansion in both categories, taking into account the justified interests of the developing world. To put it bluntly, my country, Germany, is not and has never been after a quick fix. We need a more accountable Council and therefore a review process. We need a reform of the veto to make the Council more democratic, and Germany has put on the table what I think is a realistic proposal to tackle this challenge. We need a reform of its working methods to make the Council more transparent.

The question is: How do we proceed? We are indeed, as my colleague from Viet Nam put it, at a crucial juncture. One might argue that a debate on procedural questions is a waste of time and that substance should be discussed instead. I beg to differ. We have been discussing substance for seven years and I am afraid we might see a repetition of these discussions for the eighth year in the Open-ended Working Group. We do not lack substance — there are proposals on the table; we lack procedure. We lack not words, but action. I could not agree more with my colleague from Australia that the negotiating dynamics of the Working Group have assumed a life of their own, to the detriment of substantive progress.

In this context, I would once again, as I did on 17 October on the occasion of the debate on agenda item 11, "Report of the Security Council", like to quote the Secretary-General in his speech of 12 September 2000 before the General Assembly:

> "Consensus is highly desirable, but it need not mean waiting for absolute unanimity on every sub-clause among 189 Member States. The minority, often a very small minority, should not withhold its consent unreasonably ... We can no longer afford to operate always at the level of the lowest, and slowest, common denominator." *(A/55/PV.10, p. 2)*

All members know what happened in the Working Group on Security Council reform this year. The draft of both our Vice-Chairmen on general observations failed in the Working Group, despite its excellent content and the broad support it enjoyed from reform-minded countries. It was possible for a minority of Member States — and here again I would like to reiterate the words of my colleague from Australia to the effect that this minority represents a small, unrepresentative number of Member States — to prevent the Working Group from reaching an agreement on this issue. The only positive outcome of this deplorable development is that the original version of the Vice-Chairmen's draft has become an annex to the report and thus gives us an untouched picture of the Bureau's views and assessment. I would recommend that everybody take a close look at this excellent paper and get an idea of where we stand and where we might go from here.

I sincerely hope that you, Mr. President, and the Bureau of the Working Group will take a lead in the reform discussion. We might also consider combining efforts with the Secretary-General, who has always guided us towards new horizons. The Millennium Summit and the general debate have proven again that there is a broad basis for the reform issue. Even specific elements, such as the enlargement in both categories and the need to reform the veto, have been mentioned by an impressive number of Member States. We must transform these verbal commitments into deeds.

Again, we do not lack substance or words. We lack action and we urgently need initiative.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): As with many other delegations, Ukraine's participation in this debate and subsequent consideration of this item will inevitably be influenced by contradictory feelings of encouragement and disappointment.

On the one hand, the untiring interest in this item is a clear demonstration of the broad understanding

among Member States of an urgent need to reform the Security Council — that is, to bring its structure and working methods into line with the realities and requirements of today's world. On the other hand, despite the protracted deliberations about this issue, both in the General Assembly and in the framework of the Open-ended Working Group, we do not so far find ourselves much closer to achieving any substantial results on the matter.

For seven consecutive years various aspects of reform have been discussed in detail within the Working Group. A wide range of proposals and ideas has been submitted by Member States and other participants in the process. The Working Group's discussions during the last General Assembly session were also of a substantive nature and were characterized by an engaged and constructive climate. Nevertheless, the Working Group once again appeared not to be in a position to submit to the General Assembly any agreed recommendations on the substance of the matter, except that the Group should continue its work during the next session.

With such a slow pace in Security Council reform, there exists a real danger that this issue will become one of the so-called frozen items on the General Assembly's agenda. This would not be acceptable to Ukraine or, I hope, the majority of other Member States. The impressive list of speakers on this item is clear proof of that.

The Security Council, as the body entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, represents the central element of the collective security system established by the United Nations Charter. The majority of Member States, including Ukraine, associate with the Security Council the realization of their legitimate right to live in peace and prosperity, free of any form of coercion, and with full respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is absolutely essential that in the twenty-first century the Security Council preserve its authority and enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness. Attaining this goal depends very much on the results of the efforts to achieve the Council's comprehensive transformation.

Taking advantage of today's discussion, I would like to reiterate the basic elements of Ukraine's position on the matter. First and foremost, the reform should be based on strict compliance with the norms and principles of the Charter. Equitable geographic distribution of non-permanent seats in the Security Council represents the principle to which Ukraine attaches special significance. Ukraine could not agree to any comprehensive reform proposal that does not take into account the interests of the Group of Eastern European States. Obvious underrepresentation of the Eastern Europeans in the Security Council provides convincing arguments in favour of their claim for allocation of one additional non-permanent seat in the enlarged Council.

With respect to the idea of creating new permanent seats in the Council, we continue to maintain that those countries which are able and willing to take greater responsibility — including financial — in the maintenance of international peace and security, and which enjoy the necessary international authority and support at both the regional and global levels, may receive that status.

The institute of the veto is another major issue, which bears a direct relationship to the effectiveness of the Security Council. Ukraine strongly believes that, under present political realities, the veto right is absolutely obsolete. Although over recent years this undemocratic instrument has been applied by the permanent members less frequently than in the past, our recent experience, including as a member of the Security Council, gives us enough examples of when the mere existence of the veto right prevented the Security Council from exercising its Charter responsibilities. If we do not want such incidents to occur in the future, resolute action is required to find a generally acceptable solution to this issue.

Significant progress has been achieved in improving the working methods of the Security Council and in increasing transparency in its activities. Ukraine will continue to encourage the Council to move further towards starting a new phase in its relationship with Member States, on behalf of which it takes the decisions in the realm of peace and security. The non-members of the Security Council, first and foremost the parties to the dispute and the major troop-contributing countries, should be given broader opportunities to influence the decisions of the Council.

I should like to conclude my contribution to this debate by highlighting the fact that the leaders of Member States have twice in the last five years emphasized the need to reform the Security Council.

As far back as five years ago, in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, they expressed their position in the most unambiguous manner by stressing that the Security Council should

> "be expanded and its working methods continue to be reviewed in a way that will further strengthen its capacity and effectiveness, enhance its representative character and improve its working efficiency and transparency". (*Resolution 50/6, Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, para. 14*)

And more recently, in the Millennium Declaration, our leaders resolved

> "To intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects". (*Resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 30*)

My delegation believes that these are mandatory directions to the General Assembly and its relevant Working Group. They are also mandatory directions to the President of the Assembly, who may count on the full support and understanding of my delegation in your efforts to move this process forward. To share with you and the members of the General Assembly some of the major conclusions based on Ukraine's first-hand experience regarding this matter, I conclude with just one conclusion from the remarks made by Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, on the day the report of the Open-ended Working Group was adopted:

> "If there is still a need for something to be explored after five years of intensive discussions, perhaps it is our ability to see beyond our national interests and our aptitude to measure this reform against the historical imperatives of today's world." *(A/52/PV.91, p. 7)*

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Security Council reform is without doubt the most delicate task related to the overall reform of the United Nations, and its result will probably have the biggest long-term impact on the future of the Organization.

The Security Council is not democratic, fair or representative. It is not effective, and cannot be, given its current composition and working methods. These realities cannot be ignored, even by the most optimistic. Each new international crisis reminds us of the weaknesses of the Council and its practices. To give just one example, we can all see how in the current crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories the Security Council is completely paralysed because of the opposition of a permanent member to taking action.

Let us not mince words: the Security Council today is effective only in preserving the interests of the permanent members.

The number of Member States of the Organization has multiplied by almost four times since 1945. Nevertheless, more than 35 years have elapsed since the membership of the Council was increased from 11 to the current 15, even though since that last enlargement 76 new Members have joined the United Nations.

Having a Security Council with fewer than 26 members cannot solve the current imbalances. Therefore, at least 11 new seats should be created. That would allow the Council members to constitute at least 13 per cent of the overall United Nations membership, although this would continue to be a lower figure than in similar bodies in other international organizations.

Of greater concern is the fact that two-thirds of the 189 Member States are developing countries, which are totally under-represented in the Council. The basic objective of the enlargement of the Council should therefore be to rectify that unacceptable under-representation of the developing countries.

Both categories of Security Council members — the permanent and the non-permanent members — should be expanded. Once the category of permanent members has been increased, at least two countries from Africa, two countries from Latin America and the Caribbean and two developing countries from Asia should become members. The new seats created by the Council as a result of its expansion should have exactly the same rights and prerogatives as the current ones, without discriminatory criteria being established.

The veto holds a central place in the Council reform. The anachronistic and undemocratic veto privilege should disappear and the double standard should end. The Council should recover its credibility and fulfil its obligation to act on behalf of all Member States. Currently the opposition of a single permanent

member can prevent the will of the other 188 Member States from being achieved.

The root cause blocking Security Council reform, which is also what determines the current dynamic of that organ, is the very existence of the veto itself and its indiscriminate use. We cannot make much progress while permanent members continue to firmly oppose any restriction in the exercise of their veto privilege.

No one can seriously argue that of the approximately 290 times that the veto was used, it was done in the interest of the international community, pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter, excluding the countless times that the so-called silent veto has been used in the Council's informal consultations and has determined their direction.

Until the final objective of eliminating the veto is achieved, as a first step we need to limit it to actions taken pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter; not by unilateral declarations of intent, as some have proposed, but by an amendment of the Charter to that effect.

The need for greater transparency in the Council's work is an urgent matter. In an increasingly interdependent world, the decisions taken by that body have growing implications, direct and indirect, for all Member States.

We welcome the increase in the number of public debates of the Security Council and the holding of more private meetings with the participation of Member States of that body, although the so-called informal consultations continue to be the rule rather than the exception in the Council's work.

More important still, among the matters on which provisional agreement has been reached in the Open-ended Working Group is the provision that Security Council meetings should, as a general matter, be public and open to participation by all Member States. Only in cases in which the Security Council agrees that exceptional circumstances demand it should informal plenary consultations of that organ be held.

But the main objective must not just be to increase the number of open meetings but rather to turn such meetings into a real opportunity for non-members to make useful contributions. Too often we witness open debates in the Council that in the long term have no effect on the resolutions or presidential statements adopted, because the texts have been previously approved by Council members behind closed doors.

It is true that after seven years after the establishment of the Working Group, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/26, and more than twenty years after the item of the reform of the Council was included on the General Assembly agenda, the discussion on several aspects of the reform has fallen into a vicious circle that seems very difficult to break out of.

But the Working Group format cannot be blamed for that, nor can the lack of progress be used as a pretext to weaken that Group. Cuba will not support establishing parallel negotiating mechanisms characterized by low transparency or by the selective discussion of specific matters related to reform that are of special interest to specific States.

The issues in clusters I and II should continue to be studied by the Working Group in a balanced manner in terms of time and attention, as composite parts of a whole.

I wish to conclude by thanking Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, as well as Ambassador De Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Dahlgren of Sweden for the excellent manner in which they guided the work of the Working Group this year.

We hope that next year we will be able to honour the mandate approved by our heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit, intensifying efforts to achieve a real complete reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): This year, like the past seven years, the General Assembly is again considering the report of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform.

First, Mr. President, I wish to congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, as well as our two Vice-Chairmen, the Ambassador of Sweden and the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, for their personal efforts made throughout the last session aimed at achieving progress in the work of the Working Group.

The report before us today reflects the results of their personal efforts, as well as all our individual and collective contributions over the past twelve months

aimed at ensuring progress in carrying out Security Council reform.

It is said that, like all human creations, institutions that do not evolve to adapt to demands and realities gradually end up losing their effectiveness, their credibility and even their representativity. This is also true of the Security Council, which continues today to reflect the relations between powers established at the time of its creation.

Since the General Assembly decided, in December 1993, in its resolution 48/26, to establish the Working Group on the restructuring of the Security Council, all the delegations present have devoted much energy to reflection on the subject and much patience in seeking points of agreement, in an attempt to succeed, finally, in reforming this central organ of the United Nations system, as so many desire.

Our work has enabled all Member States, small and large, to reveal and promote their positions, both on the shape and scope of Council expansion and on the working methods and decision-making process of the organ.

The depth and quality of the analyses and proposals made are impressive, and they have made possible three major breakthroughs.

The first breakthrough was the unanimous adoption on 23 November 1998 of resolution 53/30, which settled an important question regarding the required majority to adopt a decision on Security Council reform. That resolution is clear in responding to the well-founded concerns of some Member States that feared the possibility of adopting a reform that did not respect the concept of general agreement.

The next breakthrough was that clear guidelines emerged in the course of our discussions as to the future structure of a reformed Security Council, notably the fact that its composition should take into account the increase in the number of Members of the Organization and the changes that have taken place since 1945. In that regard, it should be noted that the vast majority of delegations emphasized the need to increase the number of both permanent and non-permanent seats in order to establish a clear balance between the North and the South and between developing and industrialized countries.

The last breakthrough was significant progress in our discussions about the Council's working methods. With a little goodwill, we should certainly be able to reach agreement on this matter.

It must nevertheless be pointed out that — despite the concrete and laudable breakthroughs that have been made — full, comprehensive reform of the Council, to make it into a modern, democratic and transparent body, remains a distant goal. Many questions remain, in a sense, suspended — in particular those relating to the Council's future composition, expansion of the two categories of members, and the use of the veto power.

My delegation has always expressed the hope that a dynamic compromise could be reached between the two schools of thought on the future composition of the Council — that calling for democratization of representation in the Council, by expanding it to 26 members, and that calling for efficiency in the Council's work by fixing the number at 21. A Security Council with a membership of 24 or 25 would certainly be a dynamic compromise between the two schools. But it must be recalled that any compromise, whether dynamic and one which we all subscribe to, should not be to the detriment of the interests of my continent, Africa.

With specific regard to expansion, there is no doubt that the differences continue to be great between those who favour expansion in both categories and those who envision an expansion limited to the non-permanent category of membership. In the course of this debate, we Africans have proposed — and once again insist upon — an expansion of the Council in both categories of membership and on Africa's having at least two permanent and two non-permanent seats assigned on the decision of Africans themselves according to a rotation system based on criteria appropriate for Africa currently in effect and any future improvements to them.

I would like to be clear about the rotation mechanism, so as to put an end to certain rumours that there are differences between Africans over this concept. There are no differences. In the 1997 Harare summit Declaration, heads of State and Government gave African Permanent Representatives to the United Nations a mandate to examine in detail the concept and modalities for rotation, as well as how it would be applied to the two permanent seats to be given to Africa. On the basis of that mandate, the African Group in New York submitted in July 1998 at Ouagadougou to the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African

Unity (OAU) and document that I had the honour to present on behalf of African Group. It contained concrete proposals for the mechanism, including a unique option to determine the criteria for selecting African candidates and the duration of their tenure as African permanent members.

It should be highlighted that the OAU leaders gathered at Ouagadougou in 1998, at Algiers in 1999 and, most recently, at Lomé were not able officially to adopt the rotation document, because some countries believed that the document should be considered patiently and in detail, given that the slow pace of negotiations in the United Nations Working Group indicated that its work would certainly not be completed soon.

That is the current state of affairs with regard to rotation. Once again, it is not an issue of differences on the concept of rotation itself, for which the political will exists. Africa at the moment believes that this formula for rotating permanent seats offers the double advantage of allowing, on the one hand, a wide democratization of the system of representation in the Security Council while taking into account the global interests of the continent and of the world.

Our Group's ad hoc Committee on Security Council reform, over which I preside, will soon resume its work to see how it can improve the study it has presented, in accordance with the instructions of the last meeting of the OAU Council of Ministers, held at Lomé. In any case, we are pleased with the interest aroused in the Working Group by the proposed African formula for seat rotation.

Turning to the power of the veto, I would like to say that this sensitive and complicated question has been widely discussed during our negotiating sessions in the Working Group. One constant has emerged from those meetings: that a vast majority of States consider the veto to be an anachronistic and discriminatory right, and favour at least limiting its use, with a view to its gradual elimination. For these States, limited use of the power of the veto would make it politically and morally more acceptable.

But, because of the oft-stated positions of the five permanent members — which are disinclined to accept the principle of the reduction, much less the elimination, of their powers within the Security Council — our action and our thinking should now be guided by realism. Thus, aware that discussion of the use of the right of veto could certainly block Council reform, I suggested in April 1997 that a substantive debate on the question of the veto be commenced with the permanent members and that, if necessary, a new forum be set up in which only the question of the veto would be discussed with the permanent five with a view to identifying, with them, possible formulas and arrangements on the use of the veto that were acceptable to them. That proposal remains timely.

In the course of the debate, a number of other delegations too have made pertinent suggestions to improve the Council's working methods; if implemented, these would aim to ensure greater transparency and legitimacy for that principal organ, which bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

As I have said, there has already been notable progress in this sphere in terms of the considerable number of public official meetings of the Council which, in recent times, have been devoted to subjects of interest to the international community. We must take note of such breakthroughs. Moreover, all the measures recommended by delegations, if they enjoy broad consensus, should be institutionalized.

It seems to me essential, with a view to adapting the Council to our times, to adopt a system of periodic reviews taking account of the way in which the world has evolved. I believe that only the duration of the review period remains problematic. This should not be an insurmountable problem given the political will.

The Security Council reform exercise requires that Member States take innovative and responsible approaches, given the importance and particular interest that all States Members of the United Nations attach to that body. Let us recognize that the Working Group has made tangible progress, even though no consensus has yet been reached on fundamental issues such as the expansion and composition of a future Council and the use of the right of veto.

There are today sufficient elements that could form the basis of overall reform. It would be unfortunate for the twenty-first century to begin without the prospect of serious reform that could adapt the Security Council to the modern-day imperatives of the maintenance of international peace and security.

In that context, the Secretary-General rightly reminded us in his millennium report that

> "The United Nations must also adapt itself to the changing times. One critical area ... is reform of the Security Council. The Council must work effectively, but it must also enjoy unquestioned legitimacy. Those two criteria define the space within which a solution must be found. I urge Member States to tackle this challenge without delay". (*A/54/2000, para. 331*)

We must as Member States shoulder the weighty responsibility of greater involvement in bringing about such reform of the Security Council, with realism and clear-sightedness and in a spirit of compromise, in order to protect the credibility and legitimacy of that key organ.

I wish in conclusion to reaffirm the unwavering commitment of African countries to be involved in the attainment of this common objective. There is no need to recall that for us Africans, Council reform is a historic opportunity that could enable us to be better represented on that principal organ. Africa therefore considers that it must not be made to miss this chance to finally achieve rotating permanent seats and additional non-permanent seats on a United Nations organ that is of great importance because of its real decision-making power.

That indicates the high degree to which we Africans are prepared to support and follow through on any initiative that the President of the General Assembly may undertake to accept the challenge of Security Council reform, which is the sole missing link in the overall reform of the United Nations — which has been a very atelier of reform led so intelligently by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, since 1997.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): Allow me to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, as well as the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, Ambassadors Hans Dahlgren of Sweden and John De Saram of Sri Lanka, for all their work over the past year. Ambassador Dahlgren is of course no longer with us but I would like to place on record the gratitude of my delegation for his tireless commitment to the Open-ended Working Group and for his determination, together with Ambassador De Saram, in helping us all to make steady, verifiable progress on this important matter.

For the first time, the annual report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/54/43) invited the General Assembly to consider the question of Security Council reform during its fifty-fifth session and suggested that the Group should take into account the views expressed here over the next two days. While these annual debates in the General Assembly on the range of matters to do with reform of the Security Council are in any event extremely useful, this one is potentially even more so.

Previous debates have provided opportunities to review work of the previous year, to restate national positions on the substance of the issues and to ask whether the coming year might enable us to make greater progress in approaching that elusive general agreement to which we are directed in resolution 48/26 — or indeed, whether we find ourselves any closer to a formula which would enjoy the level of support which as a minimum we set down in resolution 53/30.

It is important that we all recall clearly that today's debate comes in the wake of the Millennium Summit, where our heads of State or Government resolved

> "to intensify [their] efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects." (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*)

That is a clear challenge which requires an adequate response in terms of the creativity, flexibility and determination which we must now bring to this work. We are being asked to intensify our efforts, here and in the Open-ended Working Group when it meets in the new year. We are called upon to achieve progress. We are exhorted to strive for comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. At the very minimum, our heads of State or Government expect us to evaluate wisely, in discussions among ourselves, how best we might take forward this work, thereby ensuring that, when the Open-ended Working Group reconvenes early in the new year, we will have a focused programme of work before us and a clear idea of how we can, with best effect, intensify our efforts. I wish to assure you, Mr. President, that Ireland approaches the challenge before us in a committed and cooperative spirit, and looks forward to working with you, the Bureau and members in the Open-ended

Working Group. It is clearly incumbent upon all of us to maintain and develop the momentum created by the Millennium Summit to achieve progress on this key dossier.

In your capacity as Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. President, I have no doubt that you are reflecting, together with the other members of the Bureau, on how we might take our work forward next year. In addition to this debate, opportunities of a more informal nature will arise, enabling the Group to hear the views of the membership and these will, of course, greatly contribute to the Bureau's own consideration of a future programme of work.

In the draft report that the Bureau submitted to the Working Group this year, there was a section entitled "General observations", which, regrettably, did not meet with consensus but which is, nevertheless, most usefully attached as an annex to this year's report; it is annex XIII. In the view of my delegation, it bears re-reading, for it demonstrates very accurately, I believe, where things now stand in the Group's consideration of all the issues. Our Australian colleague, Ambassador Wensley, made this point earlier, and my delegation wishes to join the representative of Germany in underlining it.

The general observations, for example, record the increased interaction between the Working Group and the Council. They also show the considerable progress that was made in the area of the working methods of the Council, for example in holding meetings in a public format and in enhancing transparency.

The position of Ireland on the key issues of Security Council reform, such as size, categories of membership to be increased, working methods and transparency, has been rehearsed annually during the debate on this item; there is no need to repeat them all today, but I would like to reiterate some of the general principles underlying our position. First, together with the great majority of the membership, we firmly believe that the Security Council should be much more reflective of contemporary global realities and therefore be made more representative of the membership of the United Nations today. We now live in a vastly different world and we believe, therefore, that reform of the Security Council must take into account the emergence of new economic Powers and political realities. It must ensure better geographic representation and, in doing so, it must achieve a proper balance among developed and still-developing Member States.

Second, we believe that reform of the Security Council should seek to strengthen its effectiveness. We therefore believe that an increase in its membership should not be so large as to hamper its effectiveness and efficiency. Third, following on from what I have just said, Ireland believes strongly that there should be enlargement in both categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent.

Fourth, Ireland is not in favour of creating any new categories of membership. Fifth, we believe that any enlargement of the membership of the Council must not diminish the possibility for smaller and small States to serve. It is essential that the shape of the future Council should reflect, in this regard, paragraph 1 of Article 2 of the Charter, which establishes the clear sovereign equality of all United Nations Member States.

Sixth, Ireland welcomes the steps already taken to modernize the working methods of the Council and remains fully behind continually broader and more transparent consultation procedures with the general membership. Seventh, Ireland is firmly on record as favouring a review of the decision-making process of the Council. We recognize that this is a sensitive question, but we sincerely believe that, if we are to achieve something meaningful in terms of reform of the Council, we will have to address this issue sooner or later.

Ireland has worked untiringly with a group of like-minded, small and medium-sized countries to present a view that we continue to believe could represent what I might describe as the pragmatic middle ground. At all times, we have pursued what we believe to be a realistic and balanced approach, while at the same time recognizing the high degree of political sensitivity surrounding certain reform issues. While these sensitivities exist and will be factored fully into a solution scenario, they must not obscure the wide degree of commonality, in approach and on substance, that exists among us on the reform agenda.

More than two years ago we set out some considerations on the question that is perhaps the most sensitive of all: the veto question. We did so in recognition of the simple fact that it remains central to the reform of the Council. In the proposals that the group of small and medium-sized countries presented,

we asserted that steps to curtail the scope and application of the veto should be part of a global approach to reform of the Security Council. We went on to provide some practical suggestions that did not require Charter-based changes. We accepted that these fell short of the fuller desires of many delegations, including our own. Nevertheless, they seemed to us to provide a pragmatic and achievable — albeit partial — solution to what remains a highly political and sensitive problem.

We remain convinced that, if there is one issue on which there is very broad agreement, it is the fact that, without an understanding on the future scope and application of the veto, general agreement on a comprehensive reform package is unlikely to be achieved. This prompts us to suggest that the time may now be ripe for the five permanent members of the Security Council to consider whether some movement on their part on the veto could provide crucial, renewed impetus to the task, which they share with us, to reform the Council.

In conclusion, I believe it is worth recalling, as we look forward to our work in the Working Group in the new year, that there exists, verifiably, a critical mass among the membership in favour of change, of enlargement in both categories and of parallel progress on both cluster I and cluster II issues. Perhaps these reflections might prompt us, with your guidance, Mr. President, to consider how best to organize our work to take advantage of the new impetus given by the Millennium Summit and the clear resolve expressed there by the world's leaders.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me begin, Mr. President, by thanking your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, who guided us in this process during the previous General Assembly session. My thanks also go to the two Vice-Chairmen, the Ambassador of Sweden, Mr. Dahlgren, and the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Mr. De Saram, for the work that they have done.

In December 1993 Member States decided unanimously, here in the General Assembly, to review and reform the membership of the Security Council. We did so because we recognized, among other things, that the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, especially in terms of developing countries, and profound changes in international relations, necessitated fundamental change. In other words, the United Nations can no longer pretend that the present composition of the Security Council is representative of all its members.

All Member States are fully aware of the importance of the role of the Security Council and the need to reform it so that it may play its role more effectively in the post-cold-war era. We believe that the time has arrived to take concrete steps to reform the Council, even if it means we have to make hard decisions.

For the developing world, the need for reform is especially critical, given the fact that many, if not most of the conflicts that threaten international peace and stability take place between, or within, developing States, and given the clear and unambiguous link between endemic conflicts and endemic poverty.

After seven years of deliberations, we still have not achieved our objective of reforming the Security Council. Needless to say, this raises some important considerations.

Many countries have already, over the years, "voted with their feet". This is reflected in the visible decrease in the numbers of countries, both developing and developed, participating in the Working Group.

This is not because it is an unimportant issue. We need only look back to the Millennium Summit to see that the reform of the Security Council remains one of the foremost issues of the day, and is arguably the single most important reform issue outstanding on the agenda of the United Nations.

However, few delegations, especially from developing countries, can afford to participate in an endless get-together of those who can afford the luxury of indulging in endless talk, and it is now evident that no amount of enthusiastic participation and debate will suffice if some Members are not fully committed to achieving a more equitable increase in the membership of the Security Council.

The Security Council remains the only universal organ that is mandated, under Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, to determine the existence of threats to international peace and security, and to propose remedies, including the use of force, in order to restore and maintain international peace and security. It is to the Security Council then that the masses who suffer the ravages of conflict, in Africa and elsewhere, must turn.

The Security Council remains seized of many situations constituting threats to international peace and security — from Angola to Afghanistan, from Central and East Africa to the Balkans, and from the Middle East to Western Sahara. Many of these conflicts have continued for years, and the Security Council is continually expected to address increasingly more complex conflict situations.

Reforming the Security Council will not instantly resolve these conflicts. The Council should, however, at the very least, be both the symbol and the instrument of our collective resolve to act decisively to promote and maintain international peace and security on behalf of all of humanity.

Only if the Security Council is representative and acts in a transparent and accountable manner will it command the necessary respect and support, not only of all Governments, but also of the people to whom its actions and its purpose matter the most: the victims of conflict.

A more equitable increase in the membership of the Security Council should improve its ability to act with credibility and with the widest support of the international community — both of which are essential prerequisites for the more effective and efficient resolution of conflicts.

If we recognize the changed circumstances that require the reform of the Security Council, we are also compelled to acknowledge the changed composition of the United Nations membership, and thus the relevance of the provision in the United Nations Charter for equitable geographic representation. The Members of the United Nations should not allow the Security Council to continue to suffer from a lack of legitimacy, balance and credibility and, worst of all, from the perception amongst the membership that the Council suffers from a lack of political will and fails to act when required.

We are constantly reminded that many of the issues with which the Security Council is seized are African conflicts. However, 55 years after the formation of this Organization, African decision-makers have not been afforded equal representation in the highest decision-making organ on conflict prevention. This situation cannot be allowed to continue.

Let me be clear on this point. African leaders have already made up their minds. Our continent must be equitably represented on a reformed Security Council. Since there have been no serious suggestions to abolish permanent membership, equitable representation requires that Africa be represented by permanent members. This principle is not in doubt.

An examination of the Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council evokes a mixed reaction. It reflects that there is real progress and an ongoing intention to continue to improve the working methods of the Security Council. In this regard, we acknowledge this significant progress and welcome with appreciation the implementation by the Security Council of many of the Working Group's proposals to improve the transparency of the Council's work and to increase the participation by non-members in issues before the Council. The proper institutionalization of these reforms should be carried out through amendment of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council.

On the other hand, the report also reflects that the Working Group remains unable to make any substantive recommendations on how to increase the membership of the Council to render it more representative of the wider membership of the United Nations.

It is this deadlock that has led to a deep sense of frustration with the reform process. Resolving this situation is going to require profound and decisive action.

Despite the fact that certain fundamental questions remain to be resolved, and, contrary to what a few would have us believe, the choices before the membership are not the sum of all of the options and positions that have been so meticulously listed, at the insistence of those same few, in the annexes of the report over the past seven years. We are instead faced with the question of how should we go about obtaining agreement on reform options. It is my delegation's view that the process followed up until now in the Open-ended Working Group cannot take the process any further. The report clearly shows that on the question of how to equitably increase the membership of the Security Council the process has reached its

logical conclusion. No amount of further debate in the Working Group can be expected to resolve the hard choices that we will all have to make.

While we share a unanimous resolve to reform the Council, we have to accept that, no matter how desirable it would be in principle, we will never be able to reach complete consensus on the question of how to increase the membership of the Council. Neither do we have the luxury of debating for another seven years just what was envisaged by the use of the phrase "general agreement" in resolution 48/26 of 3 December 1993.

Fortunately, we have at least been able to decide, in resolution 53/30 of 23 November 1998, on the kind of majority required in the General Assembly to take a democratic decision on the increase in the membership of the Security Council. Let me add also that, in order to resolve this difficult question, and despite the fact that we ultimately took our decision without a vote, we nonetheless had to resort to the General Assembly to do so. In like manner, the process needs to be taken forward at a different level.

The time for making hard but necessary political decisions has come. It is a decision that has to be taken sooner rather than later. For this to happen, it will require commitment and political resolve on the part of the vast majority of the United Nations membership. The current permanent members, in particular, must also reach agreement on this and must display the necessary commitment to the United Nations Charter to assist in building a more representative and accountable Security Council. I may add here that this includes the question of the veto.

We now need to accept our collective political responsibilities and muster the political will to reform and take ownership of the Security Council, and bring to it the credibility and effectiveness it must have to carry out its mandate.

We look forward to sharing the views of others on the way forward and to working together with those who are ready to commit to the next level of negotiations.

Mr. Cunningham (United States): Today the General Assembly is discussing one of the most important — and frankly — one of the most vexing issues that we face as Members of the United Nations. An impartial and dispassionate observer reviewing the record of the Open-ended Working Group and the General Assembly on this subject over the years might well ask: What is taking so long? But everyone already knows the answer. There is, regrettably, not yet even an emerging consensus on how to proceed. Given the importance of the issue, we are not surprised.

Even after years of deliberation, many United Nations Members remain far apart on fundamental issues. Inter- and intra-regional competitions complicate our discussions. Fundamental issues such as the proper balance in representation between developing and developed countries, appropriate and equitable geographic representation, final Council composition — just to name some of the most obvious — remain unresolved. Are they unresolved because of some lack of seriousness or commitment within the membership? Clearly not. They remain unresolved because they are all exceedingly difficult issues — individually and collectively. Different countries and different regions maintain positions that, while rational and defensible on their own, have thus far proven mutually irreconcilable.

My country is pledged to engage actively and constructively in the analysis of new Council structures. I renew that pledge today. From the outset, the United States has been guided by one underlying principle in its approach to reforming and renewing the Council: that any change to the Security Council should contribute to a more effective Council — a Council that is reformed and strengthened, not merely expanded.

During the Open-ended Working Group's deliberations last April, the United States explicitly stated our willingness to consider proposals for Security Council reform that would result in a Council containing slightly more than 21 members. This was a significant effort on our part, in direct response to urgings of many of our friends. Many members welcomed that announcement as intended to generate additional momentum for reform. But the lack of progress towards a consensus on the composition of a reformed Council since that time is evidence that additional impetus must come from other Members as well. We believe that there is a way forward — and that is the development of specific proposals for alternative Council structures and the subsequent careful analysis of those alternatives, including those that have already been put forward, to determine their likely efficiency and effectiveness. Continued efforts to isolate particular aspects of overall Council composition, such

as treating the size and composition of an expanded Council as if they were independent variables, will continue to yield only what they have yielded in the past — that is, simply more reports that contain questions but not answers and general frustration among all the participants in the deliberations. This route has been followed for too long. It leads only to sterile debate and to repetition of past deliberations.

There is no simple answer to how best to reform the Council. If there were, we would have arrived at it years ago. It is essential, in our view, that changes to reform the Council and to make it more effective enjoy the widest possible consensus. To achieve that result, we will work hard with all other delegations that want to grapple with the difficult issues before us. We want a better Council, but we are completely unwilling to jeopardize the current one to reach that goal, and here we must be attentive to the Charter.

There are certain elements on which our national position is firm and already well known to the membership. We believe that Japan and Germany, because of their political and economic roles on the world stage, should be permanent members of the Council. And, although we realize that many Members favour limitations to or elimination of the veto, we continue to believe that the veto has real value in helping the Council maintain international peace and security and is integral to the Charter and to the United Nations itself. We will continue to oppose any effort to limit it. Focusing on limiting or eliminating the veto is self-defeating and will serve only to preclude progress.

We should all remember that the current Council structure has served the international community well and continues to do so. No doubt, it can be improved. The Council has, in fact, already taken important steps to improve transparency and adopt its working methods to today's needs. These efforts will continue. The difficult work of reform of the Security Council will not be concluded quickly, but it can be concluded well, through compromise on representation, coupled with an absolute determination not to compromise on our fundamental objective to maintain and enhance the Council's effectiveness.

Mr. Sharma (India): At the outset, I express our deep gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, and Ambassadors John De Saram of Sri Lanka and Hans Dahlgren of Sweden, for guiding the work of the Open-ended Working Group in an exemplary manner.

The debate on this subject has now become a hardy annual, which perhaps was not the intent of the membership when the resolution leading to a consideration of this subject was moved unanimously. The consensus resolution was adopted because a need was felt to reform the Security Council, including its archaic composition, to make it more reflective of the vastly expanded membership and responsive to the world today. We can, however, in resuming the debate, take both encouragement and direction from the solemn resolve of our heads of State and Government at the recently concluded Millennium Summit in New York to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. The need for Security Council reform was also stressed by an overwhelming majority of leaders during the Summit and in the general debate of this Millennium Assembly. It is therefore more incumbent upon us to persevere and address this vital issue with all the commitment and seriousness it deserves.

Seven years of deliberations on the subject have not succeeded in producing general agreement. At the dawn of a new century, we continue with an unrepresentative Council that has become an anachronism and which continues to conduct its business by superannuated and non-transparent working methods. In these circumstances, it is idle to believe that the Security Council can be considered equipped to discharge its primary responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security to the satisfaction of the members of this Organization, as the Council is bound to do under Article 24 of the Charter. The Council's actions cannot be seen to be commanding a legitimacy which its own composition and working methods do not possess.

There is little disagreement among Member States that the Council requires reform to better reflect current global realities, which have somewhat superseded those obtaining in 1945. A measure that imparts legitimacy and balance to the Council and which reflects contemporary reality would restore the Council's credibility and equip it to confront the challenges of our times. While prescriptions have varied, it would not be wise to reflect interminably on the cure for the disorder; they should be comprehensive but administered in reasonable time. A magic cure is not in our possession, but the affirmation of our leaders

is the clearest possible indication that there exists a vast reservoir of political will and conviction and takes us forward. A comprehensive package that includes expansion of the Council's membership, improvement in its working methods and reform of its decision-making process can bring this renewal.

Piecemeal and partial approaches that do not take into account the concerns of developing countries, the vast majority of the membership, would perpetuate the unrepresentative character of the Council and erode its credibility even further. Developing countries cannot continue to be marginalized when the Council's actions are primarily focused on them and the manifold impact of these actions are felt by them. The Non-Aligned Movement, which is the single largest group of Member States in the United Nations, continues to be unrepresented in the category of permanent membership of the Council. This aberration needs correction. There is also need for greater representation of the Movement in the non-permanent category.

With the increasing trend of the Council's pronouncing and impinging upon the functions of other organs of United Nations, the need for its reform and expansion becomes reinforced. The Council will now interpose itself in integrated peace operations, where instruments of development, poverty alleviation, combating hunger and disease and addressing core social challenges are being amalgamated to give the Council sharper tools to pursue its remit of maintaining international peace and security.

Notwithstanding the questionable validity of the liberal interpretation behind the Council's expanded role in the pursuit of international peace and security, it is clear that the objects of the Council's attention would be the vast majority of developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, which would have a peripheral say in the formulation of the Council's mandate that would determine the activities of a host of United Nations and other bodies, including the Bretton Woods institutions. Developing countries cannot be expected to be bystanders applauding the Council's actions from the sidelines. Non-participation by developing countries in their own affairs and destiny will, hopefully, remain a vestige of the unlamented past.

We should not yield to the temptation of drift and the path of least resistance, which would entail the preservation of the status quo, or the undertaking of cosmetic reforms which bring no resolution to the core problem. We have stated time and again that partial solutions are no solutions at all and would be a disservice to the membership of the Organization.

Both cluster I and cluster II issues are equally important and have to be addressed together. The Non-Aligned Movement has consistently argued that expansion and reform of the Security Council should be integral parts of a common package. Any attempt at securing a partial advance will contradict not only the Movement's position, but also the mandate of the General Assembly, which enjoins us to consider all aspects of the question of the increase in membership of the Council and to effectively appraise other matters related to the reform of the Council. We are also of the opinion that creating additional categories of membership based on rotation would not meet the essential aspirations of developing countries, as they would then be relegated to a subsidiary and discriminatory status. In this regard, however, we continue to respect the position of the Organization of African Unity. As the African Group has itself made clear, its preference is not intended to serve as a model for others.

As we said earlier, we believe that any increase in permanent membership should be guided by objective, and not subjective, selective or arbitrary criteria. We are confident that the membership as a whole will see this historic responsibility before it in that light. The manner of selecting new permanent members should be uniform. All new permanent members should be designated together by the General Assembly, which is the only forum which can elect them. There should be no restrictions imposed on the role or authority of the General Assembly in this regard.

We support the concept of a periodic review of an enlarged Council as long as such an exercise has universal application and promotes greater accountability and responsibility among members of the Council.

India's commitment to all aspects of the Organization's work is total and immutable. We continue to have the confidence that, on any objective grounds, criteria and belief in strengthening the work of the Council, the membership would conclude that India possesses the necessary attributes for permanent membership of an expanded Security Council.

whenever the membership finds this decision posed before it.

We look forward to the resumption of deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group next year with a view to advancing discussions on Security Council reform. We must not be distracted from the goal set out for us by our leaders. General agreement is possible with the vast majority of the membership's investing belief in and according priority to achieving a representative Council whose working methods and decision-making are both transparent and promote the collective aspirations of the general membership. We are confident that this is the dominant sentiment within the membership. We have great faith in your leadership, Mr. President, and in your guiding our deliberations in the direction of the collective interest.

Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala) *(spoke in Spanish):* For the last seven years, the Member States of the United Nations have been endeavouring to reform the Security Council, an organ whose composition and modalities of work reflect the international order created at the end of the Second World War, 55 years ago. In the world in which we now live, that pattern is not only anachronistic but also make the Council an instrument that is lacking in representativity and whose methods of work are not characterized by transparency.

In the course of this seven-year period, several Member States have, individually or jointly, have put forward proposals for reforming the Council. Those proposals have been, and continue to be, on the table, without the Open-ended Working Group established by the General Assembly to deal with the questions involved having as yet been able to examine them thoroughly.

But even though we are still far from reaching a position commanding general agreement — that is, one that is accepted by at least two thirds of the members of the Assembly — it is no less true that we have made advances, at least in regard to the questions pertaining to the methods of work of the Council. In certain ways, the Council has responded to some of the ideas that have emerged in the Working Group and incorporated them into its procedures. But this in no way means that those changes have been adequate as regards transparency in the methods of work of the Council.

In the statement that we made on this item on 20 December last year, we stressed how detrimental it has been to the United Nations that the substantial disagreements between the Member States as regards Security Council reform should have paralysed action. We remain convinced of this. The growing divergence between the composition of the Council and the way it functions, on the one hand, and contemporary realities, on the other, tends at times to marginalize the Council, and hence the United Nations, preventing them from dealing with the situations they were created to address. The world demands that we adapt multilateral institutions to the changing circumstances of our times; for seven long years, however, we have shown ourselves to be incapable of doing this. We therefore need to confront the task of reforming the Council not only with proposals pertaining to the various matters involved, but also, and chiefly, with political will, for this exercise requires concessions from all sides.

Accordingly, Guatemala's position concerning Security Council reform is based on principles that, for the sake of consistency with our analysis of the reform process, we have endowed with some flexibility. This not only enables us to understand the various positions of Member States but hopefully will also make it possible for us to reach a general agreement on reform. The central points of our position include the following.

First, the Council should be a more representative and more democratic body, better reflecting the contemporary international order, in contrast with the one that existed at the end of the Second World War.

Secondly, the Council should apply methods of work that are more transparent, although we appreciate that the nature of certain delicate situations justifies informal and relatively closed gatherings, without this practice being abused.

Thirdly, the Council should also be an organ in which the various regional groups continue to play a role in such a way as to make its composition more geographically equitable, thus guaranteeing better representation for developing countries. To this end, we support an increase in Council membership from 15 to between 21 and 26.

Fourthly, although we cannot sympathize with the institution of permanent members or with the veto power that Article 27 of the Charter now confers on them, we accept the possibility of some system by which weighting would be introduced into the decision-making process. At the very least, we believe

that the veto power granted by the Charter should be limited to action under Chapter VII. For this purpose it is necessary that the permanent members of the Council respond to the appeal being made to them by the members of the General Assembly.

Fifthly, the Security Council reform should be effected as a package deal. Thus, even though we recognize that advances have been made concerning the questions under cluster II, it should be clear that for us they cannot be detached from those contained in cluster I.

We also consider that, within the reform of the United Nations, we should seek to strengthen the powers of the General Assembly vis-à-vis the Security Council, either on the basis the Charter as it now stands or through its revision. It is necessary for the General Assembly to become the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, as provided for in the Millennium Declaration.

Finally, it is in our view imperative, as also stated by the heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration, that we should redouble our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. This is why, as we observed last year, we want to make it clear that our principal objective is to strengthen multilateralism and the United Nations. For this reason we would, as we trust the other Members of the Organization also would, be willing to see our viewpoints brought together with sufficient flexibility to make it possible to overcome the inertia under which our debates have laboured during the past seven years.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.